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AUTHOR Becker, Lee B.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

To determine the impact of college and professional experiences on journalists, interviews were conducted with graduating journalism majors at three universities in the springs of 1980 through 1982. Follow-up questionnaires were mailed in the summer following graduation. In another phase of the project, questionnaires were given to 485 journalists working full-time for broadcast and print media and wire services. Findings showed that despite differences in curricula in the various sequences, sequence had no clear impact on professionalism. Internships led to lower levels of professionalism, while role playing experiences on the campus paper had no influence on professionalism. Academic minor, type of university, and social contacts similarily were unimportant in understanding level of professionalism. Students who came to journalism because it offered training in writing, because it was viewed as an exciting field, and because of its involvement in politics were more professional than those without these motives for journalism study. The data also showed that actual experience in the field of journalism could serve to decrease professionalism of the students once they left the university. Higher professionalism scores were associated with pride in one's field. (HOD)

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The Development of Professional Values Of Journalists

By

Lee B. Becker
Jeffrey W. Fruit
Susan L. Caudill
R. Warwick Blood

School of Journalism
Ohio State University
242 W. 18th Ave.
Columbus, Ohio 43210

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Abstract

Data from a series of studies of university graduates and working journalists are used to examine the impact of university experiences on professional attitudes. The data suggest that impact may be much less than most educators assume. The reasons the students began journalism study as well as locator variables such as sex and race did make a differences in professional attitudes. The studies also show that actual experience in the field of journalism may serve to decrease professionalism of the students.

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The Development of Professional Values of Journalists

While discussions about the professional values of journalists have been prominent in the popular and scholarly literature, little research has been conducted on the means by which those professional values are acquired. The potential for real work experiences to alter those values also has not been explored.

By contrast, considerable research has developed on the socialization of individuals into other, particularly health related, professions. For example, Becker and Carper (1956 a & b) have studied students in physiology, philosophy and mechanical engineering. Merton, Reader and Kendall (1957) and Becker, Geer, Hughes and Strauss (1961) have studied the socialization of medical students. Strauss, Schatzman, Bucher, Ehrlick and Sabshin (1964) and Bucher (1965) have studied other health professionals. Bucher and Stelling (1977) investigated the ways students in biochemistry, internal medicine and psychiatry acquired their professional standing.

The concept of a professional, of course, has had long standing in the sociology of work occupations. Drawing on the summary work of Vollmer and Mills (1966), we can see a profession as an ideal type of occupation. Occupations can be classified along a continuum, with profession on one end and nonprofession on the other. Degree of professionalization would be the extent to which a given occupation possesses the characteristics of a profession. Professions (1) possess a systematic body of theory regarding professional skills, (2) grant professional authority to their members, (3) have the sanction to act in special areas, (4) possess a regulative code of ethics, and (5) develop a professional culture.

Individuals working in a given occupation may be classified according to their degree of professionalism, Bobbitt, Breinholt, Doktor and McNaul (1978) have observed. In other words, the individual workers would be classified according to how fully they internalized the value system of a profession. Strauss (1963) has listed those values as follows: professionals claim expertise, value autonomy, have a commitment to the profession, and feel a responsibility to society.

The concept of journalistic professionalism has been dealt with most extensively in the work of McLeod and his students. McLeod and Hawley (1964) developed an index to measure the professional orientation of newsmen, and that index has been used widely, including in work on Latin American journalists (McLeod and Rush, 1969 a & b), on photojournalists

(Coldwell, 1974), and on broadcast newsmen (Weinthal and O'Keefe, 1974). The measurement strategy also has generated criticism from Windahl and Rosengren (1978), Starck and Sudhaker (1978), and others.

One dimension of the criticism focuses on what McLeod and Hawley have labeled the nonprofessional attitudes or orientations. Many of these attitudes have to do with job security and advancement. Windahl and Rosengren argue that such attitudes are separate and should not be treated as polar opposites. Becker, Sobowale and Cobbey (1979), in a reanalysis of the national study of U.S. journalists by Johnstone, Slawski and Bowman (1976), reported a correlation of .01 between a professional and nonprofessional indices based on such distinctions.

Research Questions

Based on the above literature, individuals in an occupation are defined as professional to the extent they claim expertise, value autonomy, are committed to the profession, and feel a responsibility to society. Separate from this classification, individuals can be evaluated in terms of their concern with job security and advancement. Rather than call persons high in these values nonprofessional, they can be thought of merely as job security oriented.

The underlying question to be addressed here is the stability and variability of these orientations during early socialization to the profession. Specifically, the impact of area of study, professional and role playing experiences in college, reason for entry to journalism, and social contacts on the professional and job security orientations will be studied. Also to be examined will be the effects of actual full-time professional activity on these two orientations.

Those individuals majoring in print journalism are expected to be more professionally oriented than those in other areas of journalism, such as public relations or broadcast journalism. Print journalism work is more established, and concerns with professionalism of longer duration.

Those individuals with actual or role-playing experiences, such as those acquired through internships or work for a campus newspaper or radio station, should be more professional than those without these experiences. These professional and quasi-professional activities should give the individuals practice in voicing and internalizing professional values

Individuals with large numbers of social contacts with other journalists or persons training to be journalists ought to be more professionally oriented than those without these experiences. Such social

contacts should serve as reinforcing of the social norms and values.

Professional values should grow with professional experience, as noted above. For that reason, individuals with such actual full-time professional experience should be more professionally oriented than those without.

Job security concerns also ought to advance with professional progress. This should be more a result of outside concerns with family and life style than as a result of the job itself.

Methodology

To test these and other hypotheses about the impact of college and professional experiences on journalists, a series of studies have been fielded at three universities and in their surrounding professional communities since the Spring of 1980. These universities (to be identified in the final version of this manuscript) were chosen because of the diversity they offered as well as the interests of the research team assembled. Included were Ohio State University (a large, public institution), the University of Kentucky (a smaller, public institution), and Ohio Wesleyan University (a small, private university). Each offered a full range of journalistic training; the two public institutions are accredited by the accrediting council for journalism programs.

At each institution, interviews were conducted with graduating seniors in the Springs of 1980 through 1982. Students were contacted by telephone or in-person and asked to schedule a time to complete the interview. In 1980, the interviews were administered by members of the research team; in subsequent years, the questionnaire was self-administered. It was not possible to locate or gain the cooperation of all graduating seniors. Response rates varied slightly by year and university, with rates in the 70s most common.

Students completing the instrument were mailed a second instrument in the summer following graduation, that is, in the summers of 1981 through 1983. The exception was at the University of Kentucky no follow-up data were obtained in 1981 and 1983. Again, return rates varied from lows of 60% in the two years when no data were gathered at UK to a high of 73% for the year in which all three universities participated in the mailings. A total of 296 graduating seniors participated in at least the first interviews.

In another phase of the project, questionnaires were given to 485 journalists working full-time for broadcast, print and wire services in the Columbus, Ohio, market, in which OSU is located. The questionnaires were distributed in the work places for most journalists; the remainder were

distributed by mail. Questionnaires were returned by 323 persons, or 66.5% of those receiving them. Forty-one percent of the journalists in the sample worked for daily newspapers, 11% worked for weekly newspapers, 24% worked for television, 10% worked for radio, 9% worked for magazines, and 5% worked for the wire services. The figures very closely match those of the population.

Professional orientation was measured via four items similar to those appearing in the literature cited above. Respondents were asked to indicate how important a series of criteria were in judging a job. The criteria of community value, opportunities for originality and initiative, autonomy, and opportunities to gain new skills were considered to be professional. Security orientation was indexed by four interspaced items: salary, job security, mobility, and lack of social disruption.

Each of the questionnaires also contained measures of the needed independent variables from the hypotheses above. For example, respondents to the graduating senior surveys were asked about their coursework at the university, internships and editorships, and their friendship networks at college.

Results

As a preliminary step in the analyses, the eight items used for the concepts of professional orientation and job security orientation were analyzed as shown in Table 1. The respondents were presented with this list of "criteria that people can use in evaluating a job" and asked to indicate "how important the criterion is to you in judging a job in your field." The criteria are listed in Table 1 in the order given to the students and working journalists.

The four columns in Table 1 contain the means and standard deviations for each of the items. In the first column the data are presented for the graduating seniors, pooled for the three years of the study. In the second column the data are presented for panel members contacted one year after they had left the university. The third column contains satisfaction ratings for jobs held by these panel members on each of the criteria. The final column contains the responses of the workings journalists in the market studied.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of Table 1 is the comparability of these items across the four conditions. The job security item, for example, varies almost imperceptibly across the four columns. While other items show some differences, none are great. This is particularly true if column three

is ignored temporarily. Since it contains a somewhat different measure, it isn't surprising that it differs the most.

Table 2 presents the factor analyses for these eight items. Conditions were placed on the principal factoring (with iteration) solution in that two factors were called for and they were allowed to be oblique. These decisions were made on conceptual grounds. As noted above, the professional orientation was not thought of as necessarily opposite the job security orientation.

Table 2 makes it quite clear that empirically the items do not follow well the conceptual expectations. While in general the first, third, fifth and seventh items form one cluster and the second, fourth, sixth and eight form another, there are striking exceptions. The satisfaction measures, once again, are most discrepant. These two sets of four items were nonetheless used to form the indices determined by the conceptual definitions. The intercorrelations of the factors and the indices (which were created by a simple summings of the four items in each index) are shown in Table 3. These two sets of correlations are rather similar. There is a slight, positive relationship between the professional orientation and the job security orientations, excepting in the case of the satisfaction measures, were the interrelationship is somewhat stronger.

Table 4 presents means and standard deviations on the professional and security orientation indices for the graduating seniors by various indicants of experience while in the university. The security orientation measure is presented despite the fact that no specific expectations were offered for this variable. The presentation side-by-side with the professional orientation index provides a relevant comparison nonetheless.

Overall, there is little evidence in Table 4 that the university has much of an impact on either the professional or security orientation of graduates. As expected, print journalism students show the highest professional orientation scores, but the differences here are small and not significant. Advertising, public relations and broadcast journalism students are more interested in job security than the print students.

There are differences between those students with internship experience and those without, but the differences aren't as expected. Those with the internships have lower scores on the professional index than those without, and they have higher (though not significantly so) scores on job security. Role playing experiences on the college paper are not associated with professional orientation, again, contrary to expectation, though they

are associated with lower levels of security orientation.

Minor has no relationship with either orientation index, nor does the school attended or the social network of the students. In other words, contrary to prior research in other fields, social contacts do not seem to facilitate the development of professional attitudes.

Table 5 examines the relationships between various reasons for chosing journalism as a major and professional and job security orientation. Those students who chose journalism because of the writing involved, because it was viewed as an exciting field, or because of its involvement with politics do show slightly higher scores on the professionalism index than those not considering these to be important factors. Security orientation is predicted by choice of journalism because it is a good fall-back major, because it is less demanding than other majors, and because of the perception that jobs are available. The bottom of Table 5 also shows that professional orientation is associated with pride in one's field, both when the student data and comparable data from the working journalists are examined. There is a slight and nonsignificant negative relationship between commitment to the field, however, and professional orientation for the students sample. And there is a negative relationship between career commitment and the security orientation for the working journalists.

Table 6 shows that professionalism isn't associated with the occupational status of the student's father, that it is associated with sex of the respondent, and that it is associated with race of the respondent. Women have higher professional index scores than men, and nonwhite students have higher scores than white students. None of these background variables is associated significantly with the security orientation.

Data allowing for a test of the impact of work experience on professionalism and job security orientation were presented in the bottom of Table 1. While the mean scores for the graduates include nonpanel respondents as well as panel respondents, they differ marginally from those of the panel. The data show that professionalism and security orientation drop slightly from the senior year to the end of the first year away from the university. The drops (using a correlated means t-test) are significant ($p<.05$). Respondents after the year on the job do rate their jobs lower in terms of the professional and security indices than their ideal jobs. The differences on the security index is significant at the .05 level. The established, working journalists have slightly lower scores on professionalism and security orientation than the graduating seniors. These

differences also are statistically significant (p(.05). All differences, of course, are reversed from those expected. Actual professional experience was expected to lead to higher levels of professionalism, not lower levels of professionalism. The finding is consistent with that in Table 4 for internships.

While the data raise some suspicions about the indices of professionalism and job security, since they are not consistently related to most of the variables in Tables 4 through 6, the data in Table 7 suggest the measures have some validity. As expected, professional orientation predicts responses to some, though not all, of the professional issues presented in the Table. In the student sample, those higher in professionalism are more likely to think the media should pursue stories even if they make the community being served look bad. In both samples, those high in professionalism are more likely to think reporters should go to jail to protect sources, though the relationship is slight in both cases. Those high in professional orientation are more willing to run pieces boosting the community and, for the students at least, are more willing to break the law to get essential information for stories. Among the students, those high in professional orientation are more unwilling to give special treatment to advertisers.

Those high in a job security orientation, on the other hand, are more likely to think it acceptable for reporters to accept gifts from sources, to reject the idea that the media should run stories putting the community in a bad light (for the student sample), to reject the idea that reporters should be willing to protect sources, believe it all right for reporters to accept promotional trips, and agree with those high in professional orientation that community booster pieces are good. Among the students, there is a slight relationship between the security orientation and a willingness to give special treatment to loyal advertisers.

Summary and Conclusions

This research began with the assumption that the university experiences of the student journalists had impact on the professional attitudes of those students. The data reported here suggest that impact may be much less than expected. Despite differences in curricula in the various sequences, sequence has no clear impact on professionalism, Internships lead to lower levels of professionalism, while role playing experience on campus paper has no influence on professionalism. Minor, type of

university, and social contacts similarly are unimportant in understanding level of professionalism.

The reasons the students began journalism study as well as locator variables such as sex and race did make a difference. Students who came to journalism because it offers training in writing, because it is viewed as an exciting field, and because of its involvement in politics are more professional than those without these motives for journalism study. Females and nonwhites (mostly blacks) have higher professional scores than men and whites. Pride in one's field also is associated with higher professionalism scores.

The data also show that actual experience in the field of journalism may serve to decrease professionalism of the students once they leave the university. This is a rather startling comment on the actual work environment of the journalism professionals.

The data linking professionalism as an orientation with attitudes to community criticism, boosterism, circumvention of the law, and perks on the job indicate that the measures have some validity despite the lack of support for the hypotheses on the impact of college and actual work experiences. They also suggest that students and working journalists are not identical in the ways professional orientation direct behavior.

The data also show that job security as an orientation is interesting in its own right and worthy of further examination. Not only does this orientation have interesting linkages with some of the professional attitudes examined, but it also does differ depending on the major of the student as well as depending on other university experiences. In fact, job security orientation seems to be more responsive both to university and work experiences than does professional orientation.

The data are limited, of course, in that they come from rather restricted data sets. In addition, the measures of professionalism and job security orientation seem less than ideal. While the conceptual definitions do not demand that the various items used here be strongly interrelated, the degree of independence shown by these items at least raises suspicions about them. This paper has argued that some new thinking about the conceptual distinctiveness of job orientations is required. The data suggest this should be extended to the area of measurement as well.

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Table 1. Means and standard deviations of professional and security orientation items.

Items	Grad	Grad+1	Grad+1 Satis.	Established Journalists
Salary	2.13 (.55)	2.21 (.61)	1.73 (.68)	2.44 (.56)
Opportunities to learn new skills	2.81 (.43)	2.22 (.41)	2.16 (.77)	2.56 (.60)
Job security	2.31 (.68)	2.30 (.63)	2.39 (.68)	2.33 (.62)
Job valuable to community	2.20 (.68)	2.08 (.68)	2.23 (.66)	2.14 (.68)
Can advance in organization	2.58 (.61)	2.53 (.64)	1.96 (.82)	2.23 (.69)
Opportunities for originality/initiative	2.83 (.41)	2.80 (.44)	2.20 (.85)	2.76 (.44)
Not disrupt family/ social life	1.98 (.70)	1.79 (.69)	2.07 (.69)	1.97 (.68)
Autonomy and freedom from supervision	2.10 (.70)	2.09 (.69)	2.29 (.69)	2.12 (.67)
Security index	6.07 (1.58)	5.83 (1.61)	5.08 (1.80)	5.85 (1.67)
Professional index	6.95 (1.26)	6.81 (1.34)	5.86 (2.24)	6.46 (1.53)
N	274	169	135	290

Note: Potential range for the items was 1-3.

Table 2. Factor matrices for professional and security orientation items, two factor solution, orthogonal rotation.

Items	Grad		Grad+1		Grad+1 Satis.		Estab. Journ.	
	I	II	I	II	I	II	I	II
Salary	.60	-.36	.65	-.28	.26	.26	.40	-.47
Opportunities to learn new skills	.18	.53	.22	.42	-.05	.67	.30	.27
Job security	.60	.12	.50	.01	.60	.49	.43	-.28
Job valuable to community	.12	.17	-.01	.47	.01	.58	.18	.32
Can advance in organization	.44	.10	.34	.10	.21	.57	.40	.00
Opportunities for originality/initiative	.19	.20	.07	.41	-.43	.82	.48	.35
Not disrupt family, social life	.25	-.25	.35	.05	.18	.16	.25	-.09
Autonomy and freedom from supervision	.05	.01	.06	.17	-.21	.54	.26	.09
N	274		169		135		290	

Note: Items are listed in the order in which they appeared in the questionnaires.

Table 3. Factor correlations and correlations between indices of professional and security orientation (Pearson's).

	Factor Correlation	Index Correlation
Graduates (n=274)	.18	.10
Graduates 1 year later (n=169)	.17	.07
Graduates 1 year later (satisfaction with job; n=135)	.42	.40
Established journalists (n=290)	.23	.18

Table 4. Means and standard deviations for professional and security orientation indices by university experiences of graduates.

Professional Experience	Professional Orientation	Security Orientation
Sequence		
Print journalism (124)	7.08 (1.39)	5.63 (1.52)
Broadcast journalism (35)	6.66 (1.23)	6.49 (1.69)
Public relations (82)	6.97 (1.13)	6.26 (1.60)
Advertising (27)	6.56 (1.09)	6.75 (1.45)
F=	1.93	6.16**
Internship		
Yes (137)	6.84 (1.31)	6.15 (1.56)
No (66)	7.18 (1.26)	5.86 (1.71)
F=	3.10*	1.53
Editorial position on student paper		
Yes (63)	6.98 (1.42)	5.77 (1.48)
No (138)	6.94 (1.26)	6.18 (1.66)
F=	0.06	2.86*
Minor		
Marketing, business (41)	7.13 (1.08)	6.51 (1.54)
Physical sciences (5)	7.40 (1.52)	5.00 (1.00)
Humanities (95)	7.01 (1.17)	5.86 (1.49)
Social sciences (90)	6.79 (1.40)	6.13 (1.78)
None (24)	6.88 (1.39)	6.09 (1.64)
F=	0.78	1.73
School		
Large public (166)	6.93 (1.19)	6.11 (1.60)
Smaller public (77)	6.86 (1.47)	6.03 (1.63)
Small private (53)	7.21 (1.13)	5.72 (1.45)
F=	1.36	1.23
Friends		
All J-majors (3)	7.00 (1.00)	7.34 (2.08)
Most J-majors (58)	6.95 (1.29)	5.87 (1.49)
Some J-majors (214)	6.97 (1.28)	6.08 (1.59)
None J-majors (15)	6.87 (1.19)	5.53 (1.64)
F=	0.00	1.44

Note: Values behind the categories are category Ns. Column entries are means and, in parentheses, standard deviations.

* Significant at the .10 level.
** Significant at the .05 level.

Table 5. Correlations (Pearson's) between professional and security orientation indices and reasons for majoring in journalism and pride in and commitment to field.

Item	Professional Orientation	Security Orientation
Reason for majoring		
Good major if other career plans change (290)	.00	.13**
Reputation of program (291)	.06	.07
Curriculum allows more freedom than other majors (291)	.09*	.09*
Get to do a lot of writing (292)	.13**	.12**
Curriculum is less demanding than others (282)	-.03	.15**
Journalism is exciting (198)	.18**	-.05
Lots of jobs in journalism (185)	.03	.18**
Interested in politics and current events (203)	.20**	-.05
Curriculum is more demanding than others (193)	.07	-.03
Pride in field (273)	.15**	-.00
(Est. Journ. n=313)	.19**	.06
Career commitment (258)	-.09	-.00
(Est. Journ. n=305)	.03	-.11**

Note: Entries are for student samples except where noted. Values behind the items are Ns. Some measures were not used in 1980.

* Significant at the .10 level.
** Significant at the .05 level.

Table 6. Means and standard deviations for professional and security orientation indices by background characteristics of graduates.

Background Characteristics	Professional Orientation	Security Orientation
Father's occupation		
Below managerial (111)	6.92 (1.33)	6.17 (1.54)
Managerial and above (152)	6.96 (1.19)	5.97 (1.56)
F=	0.05	1.08
Sex		
Male (114)	6.72 (1.49)	5.68 (1.65)
Female (180)	7.10 (1.06)	6.11 (1.54)
F=	6.31**	1.45*
Race		
White (266)	6.90 (1.25)	5.98 (1.59)
Non-white (27)	7.48 (1.25)	6.44 (1.47)
F=	5.47**	2.13

Note: Values behind the categories are category Ns. Column entries are means and, in parentheses, standard deviations.

* Significant at the .10 level.
** Significant at the .05 level.

Table 7. Correlations (Pearson's) between professional and security orientation indices and attitudes toward occupation decisions.

Item	Professional Orientation	Security Orientation	N
Reporters should refuse all gifts	.02 -.00	-.14** -.12**	295 315
Media should pursue stories, even if make community look bad	.14** .03	-.14** .02	202 317
Reporters should not disguise identity	.01 .07	.05 .04	290 318
Reporters should go to jail to protect sources	.08* .07	-.10** -.07	289 307
Media should not run story about advertisers	-.04 .04	-.03 .02	287 307
All right to take junkets	.01 .04	.16** .14**	285 307
Media should run booster pieces about community	.21** .13**	.13** .13**	204 310
Reporter should break law for essential documents	.16** .00	-.05 .10*	190 309
Reporters should be willing to publish information received off the record	-.03 -.09**	.01 .02	200 309
Reporters should give special treatment to loyal advertisers	-.17 .06	.09* .02	200 313

Note: The first row of entries is for the student data; the second is for the established journalists. Some measures were not used in 1980.

* Significant at the .10 level.
** Significant at the .05 level.